



A Quick Look

Washington State Department of Ecology

***Our mission:** The mission of the Department of Ecology is to protect, preserve and enhance Washington's environment and promote the wise management of our air, land and water for the benefit of current and future generations.*

Message from the Director



The quality of the environment affects everyone. Clean air, water and soil are essential for good health and quality of life. They're also important to many sectors of the business community, including tourism and agriculture. This department works in partnership with the public to preserve and manage resources that are important to our future, and to prevent and clean up pollution so we can lead healthy lives.

Much of Washington's pollution comes from the combined effects of many small sources. Our population of about 5.8 million people burns wood stoves, grows lawns and gardens, drives cars, creates and expands industries, constructs buildings, and generates garbage, sewage and other waste.

All of these activities have potential for producing pollution. We also use large amounts of water for drinking, bathing, laundry, irrigation, washing cars, industrial purposes, etc. Together, the effects of living and working can add up to big environmental problems. That's why it's important for all of us to avoid creating waste and pollution.

For those who want to support the environment, the Department of Ecology provides a great deal of useful information and education. Enforcement is also a part of protecting the environment, for those who violate environmental laws. We have learned that people who commit extra money and effort to protect the environment want assurance that someone else won't gain a competitive advantage by ignoring it.

Through stewardship by all of us, I believe we can protect and sustain our communities and the environment far into the future. We invite you to call us if you have questions, suggestions for serving you better, or ideas about improving the environment in your community. We are here to listen and work with you to keep Washington a great place to live and work.

History

In 1970, the state legislature declared that residents have a right to a healthful, pleasant environment and assurance of proper development and use of the state's natural resources. Several small agencies that provided environmental protection at the time were combined and renamed the Department of Ecology. Today, Ecology provides services through our headquarters in Lacey, and four regional offices and several field offices that are located in communities around the state.

Since the 1970s, air quality in Washington cities has improved, toxic chemicals released by industry have dropped significantly and we attained one of the highest waste-recycling rates in the country. Water quality also has improved notably in some areas, but is still threatened in others. While we are proud of our successes, we recognize there are more improvements to be made and we must be vigilant about maintaining the ground we've gained.

We are

Scientists, engineers, educators, managers and support staff. We carry out nearly 150 state and federal environmental laws covering:

- Air quality
- Water quality
- Hazardous and nuclear wastes
- Water allocation
- Shoreline and wetlands protection
- Prevention, response and cleanup for oil and hazardous-material spills
- Commercial underground storage tanks
- Litter control
- State and federal environmental grants
- Land-use management and siting of major projects
- Watershed-based planning

What we do

Monitor, regulate and educate

We sample the quality of Washington's air and water, glean information on the overall health of the state's environment. We also write and enforce permits that limit the flow of pollutants into the air and water, as well as permits for handling and storing hazardous wastes. In some parts of the state, Ecology is the primary environmental regulator; in others, we support local-government efforts.

Have you seen the Dump No Waste stencils near storm drains? That started at Ecology. We also provide useful information to residents about recycling, producing less garbage, reducing emissions from cars and wood stoves, and protecting water and wetlands. In schools, the department supports teachers with hands-on curriculums. Ecology experts also help businesses and local governments comply with environmental regulations cost-effectively.

Inform, train and assist

- *800-RECYCLE* hotline.
- *TREE Program* – consulting with businesses on reducing their hazardous wastes.
- *Permit Assistance Centers* – at headquarters and regional offices coordinate environmental permits for businesses and governments.
- *Washington Conservation Corps and Ecology Youth Corps* – work and training for many citizens.
- *Accredited laboratory* (co-managed with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency).
- *Watershed planning* – working with nearly two dozen counties to develop a new style of environmental management.
- *Advance cleanup strategies* to handle spills in Puget Sound, the Columbia River and along the Washington coast.
- *Vehicle-emission inspection* programs.

Environmental Programs

Ecology consists of 10 major environmental management programs, each carrying a unique focus, or mission, that supports the agency's objectives.

Air Quality

protects, preserves and enhances the air quality of Washington to safeguard public health and the environment.

Environmental Assessment

provides reliable data and information about environmental conditions.

Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction

prevents pollution and promotes safe waste management.

Nuclear Waste

leads the effective cleanup of the U.S. Dept. of Energy's Hanford site and ensures sound management of mixed hazardous wastes in Washington.

Shorelands and Environmental Assistance

works in partnership with communities to support healthy watersheds.

Solid Waste

reduces the amount and the effects of wastes in Washington state.

Spill Prevention, Preparedness, and Response

protects Washington's environment, public health and safety through a comprehensive spill prevention and response program.

Toxic Cleanup

gets and keeps contaminants out of the environment.

Water Quality

protects and restores Washington's waters.

Water Resources

manages water resources to meet the current and future needs of the natural environment and Washington's communities.

Want to know more?

- **General Information:** 360-407-6000 in Lacey

- **Regional Offices:**

Spokane: 509-456-2926;

Yakima: 509-575-2490;

Lacey: 360-407-6300;

Bellevue: 425-649-7000

- **Field Offices:**

Vancouver: 360-690-7171;

Bellingham: 360-738-6250;

Kennewick (Nuclear Waste Program only):

509-735-7581

- **Ecology's World Wide Web site:**

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov>

If you have special access needs for this publication, call 360-407-7006 (voice) or 800-833-6388 (TTY). Ecology is an equal-opportunity agency and does not discriminate in providing services.